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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000307

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [KFLU](#) [AEMR](#) [AMED](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [TBIO](#) [KSAF](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#)
PINR, AMGT, MG, QA
SUBJECT: TFFLU01 QATAR H1N1 STATUS REPORT

REF: DOHA 288

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- There are no confirmed cases of H1N1 in Qatar as of May 7, 2009.

-- Embassy's Pandemic Influenza Working Group continues monitoring the situation in Qatar and coordinating preventive measures. Embassy and U.S. military reps will meet May 11 with Qatar's Director of Public Health to discuss possible future restrictions, particularly as they may impact U.S. military operations in/via Qatar.

-- Qatar has stockpiles of 2.6 million N95 respirators and Tamiflu courses for 20 percent of the population.

-- The airport has enhanced its entry screening procedures and will install thermal screeners by May 8. Sick passengers will be tested at the airport clinic and, if type A virus is discovered, isolated at a local hospital until lab results confirm if it is H1N1.

End Key Points.

1. (SBU) There are no confirmed H1N1 cases in Qatar as of 1600 local on May 7, 2009.

Embassy Actions

2. (SBU) Embassy's Pandemic Influenza Working Group continues to regularly consult on latest developments. Embassy was involved in quashing one rumor of a sick student/family at the American School of Doha, and realizes rumor control is likely to become a more significant need in the days to come.

3. (SBU) The Health Unit and Regional Security Office are collaborating on a briefing to be delivered next week to all Embassy staff and family members on proper hygiene and instructions on when to stay at home.

4. (SBU) Embassy and U.S. military medical representatives from the two bases in Qatar will meet Monday, May 11 with Qatar's Director of Public Health to exchange information and learn about possible future government restrictions should the virus spread to Qatar. (Note: Embassy took particular note of the new policies in Kuwait requiring travelers to report to medical facilities within 3 and 7 days of arrival. Since Qatar is also used as a major transit point for U.S. military personnel, similar requirements here would impact military operations).

Qatari Preparations

¶15. (U) In a May 7 briefing, Dr. Shazia Nadeem and Dr. Ayman Diab from the Ministry of Health's Emergency Preparedness Division updated the diplomatic corps on current procedures and preparations in case the pandemic spreads to Qatar.

¶16. (U) Qatar currently has stockpiles of 2.6 million N95 respirators, and has an order in place to bring that to 5 million. (Note: Qatar's population is about 1.8 million residents maximum).

¶17. (U) According to these officials, Qatar currently has stockpiles of Tamiflu courses for 20 percent of the population - more doses are on order and the GOQ expects to eventually have doses available for 25 percent of the population.

¶18. (U) The Qatari Ministry of Health is providing daily updates for practitioners and recommending an increase in infection control precautions. The Ministry of Health has also reportedly removed antiviral medications from the shelves of local pharmacies to prevent hoarding and misuse of the medication.

Travel Procedures

¶19. (U) According to the country's national carrier, Qatar Airways, if passengers are identified prior to boarding any inbound or outbound flight as having fever or flu-like symptoms, they will be referred to a local medical center to determine their suitability to travel.

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¶10. (U) No mandatory/compulsory entry screening measures are in place as of May 7, 2009. However, leaflets/questionnaires about H1N1 are distributed to passengers during flights into Qatar. All Qatar Airways staff also wear masks during flights to/from affected areas and distribute masks to passengers, though they do not require passengers to wear them.

¶11. (U) According to the Ministry of Health, the government will install six thermal screeners at the sole international airport (Doha) by May 8, 2009. Two more machines are on order and will be installed as soon as they arrive.

¶12. (U) Currently, if an arriving passenger is identified as a possible carrier of H1N1, they will be taken to the airport clinic and given a flu test. The airport clinic has capabilities to do an influenza rapid test, which takes between 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Specific test kits have been ordered for H1N1 and are expected to arrive in Qatar next week, but, until then, all diagnostic specimens for confirmation of H1N1 would be sent to NAMRU-3 Cairo. If the passenger tests negative for type A flu, they will be released and allowed to leave the airport. If they test positive, they will be conveyed by Civil Defense Ambulance to a local hospital (Hamad) for further testing, evaluation, and confirmation of H1N1 infection. The passenger will be isolated and placed on a 5 day course of antiviral medication. The passenger will not be allowed to leave the country until they have completed the full course of antiviral medication.

¶13. (U) Currently, there is no plan in place to screen passengers for H1N1 as they exit Qatar.

Future Actions

¶14. (U) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Health Ministers met May 2 in Riyadh and will re-convene May 9.

¶15. (U) The Ministry of Health is also planning increased public education through TV and newspapers.

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